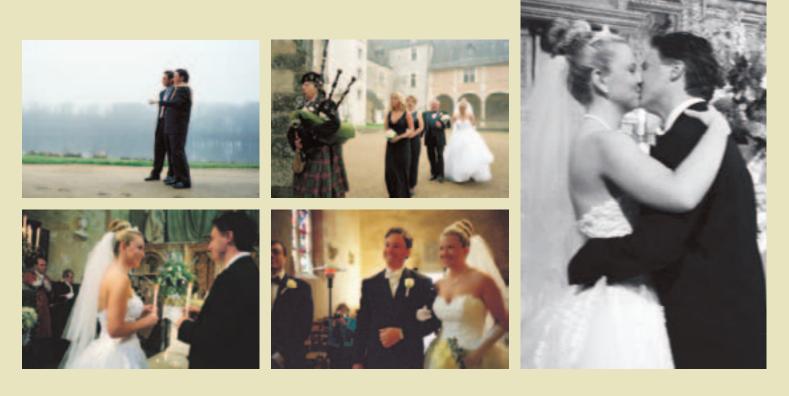# *the ride of a lifetime*

Rebecca Lynn Thompson and Marc Patoile

December 3, 2004 Aubigny-sur-Nère, France

Marc Patoile and Rebecca Lynn Thompson met on a blind date — only not with each other. Rebecca had reluctantly agreed to be set up for a group outing, but she and her date didn't hit it off. Luckily, a young man in riding boots came galloping to the rescue. Rebecca and Marc bonded over their shared passion for equestrian: She grew up on her father's ranch in New Mexico and he learned English riding after law school.

At the end of the night, Marc used Rebecca's Blackberry to ensure he would see her again. "I cleverly sent a test message to myself and – welcome to the 20th century – I had just gotten her number and e-mail address without even having to ask for them," he recalled.

The couple spent their first date at Marc's favorite French restaurant. Within months, Marc was proposing under a full moon at The Broadmoor hotel in Colorado Springs.

"I thought, 'There's no way he would ask me this weekend, because Valentine's Day is right around the corner,'" said Rebecca. "But he did it a week early to surprise me."
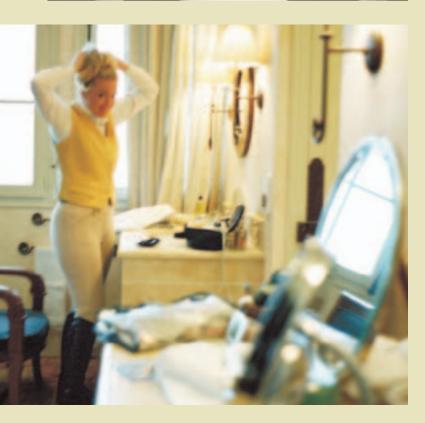
The couple had taken up fox hunting, and long planned a stag-hunting trip in France. With the perfect excuse for stateside family and loved ones to take a vacation, "We thought it would be great to combine a day of sport with our wedding," Marc said.

Marc and Rebecca choose Château de la Verrerie, in Aubigny-sur-Nère, France, as the location; the Renaissance castle sits on a forested lakeshore, and its Scottish and French history reflects the couple's family backgrounds.

A storybook-like fog surrounded the castle on the wedding day. The sound of French horns signaled the start of the ceremony, and a bagpiper accompanied the procession across a courtyard and into the Château's chapel.

Rebecca walked down the aisle wearing a vintage Eve Of Milady gown and carrying two dozen white roses tied with eucalyptus leaves. Count Béraud de Vogüé, an Anglican minister and the Château's owner, wed the couple. The horn players punctuated the ceremony with traditional hunting songs as the couple lit a unity candle and sealed their vows by sipping from a gem-encrusted silver goblet, a de Vogüé family heirloom.

"We were married by royalty," Rebecca said.

The newlyweds exited the chapel to perform the bouquet and garter tosses on the Château's grounds; a French friend caught the garter in his hunting horn. Inside the Grand Salon, friends opened champagne bottles with sabers and the couple toasted their union.
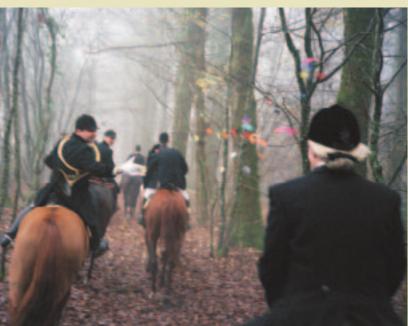
After changing into hunting attire, Marc and Rebecca were about to cross the drawbridge leading from the Château when Marc swept up his new bride and carried her over the threshold. "I felt like a prince carrying my princess out of my castle," Marc recalled.

Guests enjoyed a pre-hunt picnic of local wine, baguettes, Valençay goat cheese, and wild-boar pate. Count de Vogüé, as Master and Huntsman, began the hunt by releasing a French hare and a pack of hounds. As the

hunting party rode through the fog-laden forest, friends tossed colored confetti over the bride and groom.

The party reconvened at the Chateau's restaurant, where guests enjoyed a five-course dinner that included foie gras and pheasant followed by the pièces montée, a pastry-like traditional French cake. Friends and family then relaxed in the Grand Salon as a friend played piano and sang Elton John tunes. Afterwards, the newlyweds shared the night in the Chambre Stuart, a room with a terrace, canopied bed, and Renaissance ceiling paintings.

"It was a fairy-tale wedding," said Rebecca.

Marc and Rebecca spent their honeymoon traveling around France — and attending Paris' Salon de Cheval, the largest horse expo in Europe.

Event Planner: Gourmetfly.com (Nick de Toldi). **Florist:** Maison Linard of Bourges. **Catering:** Maison d'Hélène at the Château de la Verrerie. **Music:** Hunting horns, Aurore Gorin of Vouzeron. **Photography: Ben Eden,** London, UK. **Written by Heather V. Eng**